

TNS RECORDS

FREE FANZINE

issue 2



may 08

interviews

The Kirkz

The John Player Specials

Speeding Bee

All the information about the latest

TNSrecords release

features/shit-chatting/reviews

PUNK/SKA

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issue 2

march 08

welcome to issue 2 of TNSrecords fanzine

After releasing the TNSrecords compilation album in February we have been working very hard on pushing that CD and getting new stuff ready for our next release. At the time of writing this sales of the compilation had hit the 700 mark, which aint bad in two months if we do say so ourselves. We've also had two amazing TNSgigs in March so cheers to everyone who came and keep supporting the night.

It's been awesome being at gigs in the Manchester area and seeing the crowd singing along to tracks off the compilation CD and we are also pretty pleased we've managed to get it out in Europe and the US. We are always looking for more people to stock our releases, so get in touch if you fancy it.

We are releasing a split ep in May for two of the bands who regularly rock the fuck out of the TNS band nights; Revenge of the Psychotronic Man and the Fractions. There is more info about these two bands and how to buy this CD later in the fanzine and you can listen to a couple of tracks on myspace.com/thatsnotskankingrecords (and on their individual sites) so check them out. We hope you enjoy them as much as we do.

We are also pleased to reveal that we'll be releasing a split ep for North-West reggae/ska bands, Harijan and the John Player Specials in the summer.

Harijan have been big favourites in the North-West for a long time and we figured it was about time this amazing band got heard a bit further a field. The John Player Specials are a new band who are starting to make a big impact in the area, so keep a close eye on these guys.

Also included in this issue are interviews with TNS favourites, the Kirks, Speeding Bee and the John Player Specials and loads of reviews and features. I hope it's a good read.

Come down to our TNS band nights if you are in the Northwest. There is a gig guide later in the issue, but wherever you are based carry on supporting your underground music. Get to as many gigs as you can and help the smaller bands play to the audiences they deserve!

Andy

www.myspace.com/thatsnotskankingrecords

www.myspace.com/thefractions

www.revengeofthepsychotronicman.com

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This issue was written by: Mozza, Beth, Spawny, Liam Revenge, Dave Adair and myself

Artwork: Andy

NEW RELEASE

REVENGE OF THE PSYCHOTRONIC MAN VS

THE FRACTIONS

SPLIT EP

THE FRACTIONS



Rochdale bastards, the Fractions play a mix of melodic punk and ska with a double shot of brass to back it up. They've been on the go for the last 4 years or so and played shows all over the UK, including a couple of tours. The split EP with Revenge of... will be followed by a full debut album in the summer, and with gigs always being announced and songs always being written the Fractions look set for an exciting future.

myspace.com/the fractions

Revenge of the Psychotronic Man are fast becoming known for one of the most energetic and unpredictable live shows you can imagine. The band plays lightning fast punk rock, but are eager to maintain catchy melodies and big choruses. There is certainly a street punk ethic, with songs about drinking and escaping mundane life. After forming in 2004 they have done 5 UK tours and pushing 150 gigs. The four tracks penned for this split ep are considered by the band to be their best recordings yet. Revenge of... are playing all over the UK throughout 2008 so if you fancy witnessing some carnage, check these fuckers out.

revengeofthepsychotronicman.com

myspace.com/revengeofthepsychotronicman

This ep contains the following tracks:

Revenge of... Phill Power, This is Where the Idiot Lives, Sleep In Your Bath and the Jagermeister Song
The Fractions: Proper Successful, Out of Pocket, Down and Out

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plus other stores nationally: see myspace for info

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REVENGE OF...



SNIFFIN' GLUE

I got hold of a book the other day about the pioneering punk fanzine 'Sniffin' Glue'. With a huge interest in both punk rock and fanzines I was pretty eager to read the re-printed fanzines.

In the first issue it contains the following passage I wanted to share with people:

"The review sections try to tell you about things rather than give boring biased opinions, which we all have, but there's no room for it in fanzines. We believe rock n' roll and especially punk rock is about enjoyment and nothing else."

I thought that this was such a breath of fresh air, all the way back from the routes of the punk movement. Something I have always wanted is for TNS to be a positive thing. Why do I need to tell you about bands I don't like? I want to tell you about bands I love and hopefully you will like them too. If not, that's cool. The fact that people have different tastes and opinions is one of the things that makes music such a brilliant thing. It's great that something I love, the next person might hate, but it's all just opinion.

I get fed up of going to gigs where people just sit casting judgements on bands, and the general negativity of some people involved with punk. I'm not gonna claim I've never slagged a band off myself, but I'm gonna stop as of now. Who cares if I don't like a particular band? I'm entitled to my opinion, but why would I need to shove it down peoples throats, especially if the person next to me in the crowd is loving it?

One of the things that drew me to punk in the first place was the feeling that we are all in it together as a community and that we should embrace things that try to improve and build on our scene, rather than knocking them. I reckon we should be positive about our subculture rather than trying to constantly pick fault and cast judgement.

So from now on I'm only gonna report on bands and music that I really rate in this fanzine and TNS is going to be all about positivity and community spirit. If I see a band, that I think is crap I simply won't review them and won't force my biased opinion on you, because after all, like all of us, they are just doing their thing and who am I to knock it.

If you hate the bands I love, as I say, that's not a problem, but the way I see it I'd much rather tell you about stuff I really rate, which you may or may not like, than something that I'm indifferent to, which you also may or may not like.

I guess it goes without saying, but the same goes for our label. I genuinely love every track we have released and hope that some of you will think the same.

So anyway, here's to being positive about music and enjoying it, rather than feeling the need to constantly criticise! After all, surely that's why we all got into music in the first place.

Andy (Climbing off my high horse)



THE JOHN PLAYER SPECIALS

The John Player Specials are one of the most exciting young bands I've come across recently. If you like your ska chilled out and melodic you are gonna love this band. Check them out at: myspace.com/thejohnplayerspecials

As a fairly new band, what inspired you to get the John Player Specials together? How did you meet and what are your influences?

Each member of John Player Specials lives and breathes music. Our inspiration to play music comes from our sheer determination to change what we feel is not right, and to have an exceptionally good time performing live music to anyone who wishes to listen in the meantime. Jordan (guitar / Vox), Elliot (bass / Bk Vox) and Jimmy (trombone) had all played together already in an earlier band named "Acid Rats" the band obviously splitting due to disagreements between members concluded in us three teaming up with our college friend Little Miller, on drums and forming JPS. Each member of the band evidently has different personal influences but as a whole our influences are such artists as "The King Blues", "The Mad Conductor", "Random Hand", "Tools and the Maytals", "Inner Terrestrials", "Harlan" and countless others.

How would you describe your sound to those who are new to you?

John Player Specials are an all-original straight up Ska band. We play mellow catchy songs with a vibrant upbeat tempo. We simply play songs about life around us, from the disgust of the government to not getting served for cigs in Burghli bouzies.

What are your first impressions of the North-West punk and ska scene?

Very impressive to say the least. The amount of talented bands coming out of the underground scene is astounding. We also find all the promoters and clubs of this scene very generous and eager to help out up and coming bands.

You recently recorded your first ep. How did it go? Are you pleased with it and where can people get hold of it?

The recording went very well indeed. We didn't have a great deal of money to spend on it giving us just two days to record four tracks but obviously Tim (myspace.com/timgmusic) has more than enough talent and experience to overcome this problem. We're very pleased with the end result and we think it depicts our live sound at the moment very well. The band is going to be selling the E. P. at each one of our gigs but I also think we will be setting up some form of pay-pal account so people of further regions can get hold of it.

You just added brass to your line up. What inspired the decision and how do you think the addition of brass helps your sound?

The band was originally a four piece consisting of Jordan, Elliot, Miller and our good friend David playing trumpet for us. Unfortunately David was unable to carry on performing with the band concluding in J. P. S becoming a three piece for several months. At this time we had only just begun to play venues in Manchester, Liverpool etc consequently ending in a great deal of people who are interested in the band and our music having never heard us with brass before. Jimmy our new trombone player is the icing on the cake as far as the band are concerned.

We're also considering looking for other brass players, it's uncertain whether or not we will have a complete brass section but it would be interesting to find out if it would work.

What are your long term plans and what would you ultimately see as a success?

I consider our long term plans to be to just continue playing music that we and others enjoy. In our eyes we're still a brand new band, as we have only been gigging for a year. So just to grow as a band and become much more confident in our song writing abilities will be a good start. I feel J. P. S as a band have a lot of potential to be a great outfit. We're still in the baby stages of our career though and have a great deal to learn. We'd also like to get on the festival scene this upcoming summer starting off with a couple of local festivals and ultimately playing such events as "rebellion". For now though we're just happy to play with so many unbelievable bands and to meet a great deal of immense people. John Player Specials are always going to play Ska but as yet who knows what direction that could lead us in.

Interview by Andy



THE KIRKZ

I can honestly say that the Kirkz are the biggest thing to come out of Macclesfield since Peter Crouch. Joking aside, these guys rock! so check 'em out. Here's what they had to say for themselves!

Please describe your sound for those that are new to you?

AJ - Five on the dime, every time. We deal in the currency of hits.

Caesar - Fast but not fast enough.

Ian T - Intense, Riddled with hits.

G-Man - Funktastic once described our sound as "Rancid covering (spunga) songs". They didn't mean it as a compliment but to me that sounds like high praise indeed. Still, aside from that, our sound is kind of a cross between British and American punk-rock styles. Plus, The Kirkz have very short attention spans so you're likely to hear a variety of styles in any given performance.

I hear The Kirkz are approaching their 10 year anniversary. How has the band changed over that time and what have been the best bits? Do you still get along as well as always?

AJ - We have drunk an incredible amount in that time. It's been a smooth ride apart from those days when I live as a recluse in LA and hire people to speak to the other members of the band for me.

Ian T - Max's beard and Marilyn Manson obsession struck, Col stopped dying his hair (it's now his natural ginger tones) and I invented white trainers.

G-Man - We've gone way, way down-hill. When we first started we used to cover Nirvana and Offspring songs and had proper "rockstar" hair-dos. Somehow we got suckered into this whole playing tight and writing decent songs thing. Nevertheless, the highlight for me has gotta be playing the Wasted/Rebellion punk-rock festival - the actual playing part I could take or leave, but it's the excess of dresses acting like mega-rock stars bit that I love.

Caesar - Puberty.

How has the Northwest punk scene changed (for better or worse) during that time?

Caesar - The northwest punk scene got younger.

Ian - Better, some of the older bands that had its time for ppl have dropped off the conveyor belt whilst the other end is filling up with bands that are happy to listen to each other and help out.

G-Man - It's only recently that we realized we were actually part of a scene. For years we just seemed to be that band who crashes gigs at the last minute. But since we became the greatest in the Northwest punk scene it seems to have definitely changed for the better.

AJ - More people know my name than ever before, in fact if things continue growing at this rate then there will be a real healthy amount of people that know my name and ultimately we can measure the success of the northwest punk scene in how deafening the chant is. "MAX", "MAX", "MAX"!!!! listen, I can hear it now.

You are in the studio in March. What are you recording? Can we expect a full album?

G-Man - Yeah, we've finally met someone nice (and, let's face it, cheap) enough to let us dick around in their studio for a few days. The problem is that The Kirkz get a little giddy when it comes to studio time, but if we can keep the pissing about to a minimum we should have that long-awaited second album done by Summer.

Caesar - We're recording an album and hopefully it will be a full album.

AJ - I can't get tired of comparing us to Guns N Roses so let's just say I'm not making any promises but it's damn well about time. I see people in the street looking pale, gaunt, lifeless, devoid of ambition and hope and I know we can help them.

Ian T - We have been making some rock history with our Panic Earth single and there will be an album of similar historical impact to follow shortly.

What are your ambitions for The Kirkz? Are you happy with playing the underground circuit? What do you think about major labels? Do you think that they can ultimately hinder a band's progress more than they help it?

Ian T - My ambition is to dye the sea Kirkz green so all the losers in space know Earth is the coolest planet.

G-Man - The Kirkz have and always will have their minds set on world domination. At times, reality rears its ugly head in an attempt to dampen our spirits but The Kirkz are a stubborn bunch and we'd tell our Grandmothers to make it big.

AJ - It's hard to set a proper ambition but at its simplest I like to look back year on year and think did we do more, get bigger and have more fun than the last year. That's always the goal. Actually apart from 2003, Ian ruined that, a whole year. I can't remember why but he can do that, ruin stuff. I don't really think about major labels, the little ones are bastards enough to actually get any acknowledgement off. Think I might start a label and be a cunt. And don't you dare say I'm half-way there!!!!

Caesar - My amp is much bigger than when we started, my ambition is to get a bigger amp.

Will The Kirkz still be around in another ten years?

Caesar - We'll be 36 which is about half our life expectancy so I like those odds.

G-Man - 2018? Damn straight!! We'll be playing on the moon!

AJ - People gave up trying to kill us off after about year 7. Now they're just resigned to it. Plus we'll always be in your hearts and if you're not careful in your wallets.

Ian T - Deffo, too afraid of the W word (work) to think otherwise.

Please describe what happened on the infamous Chester zoo night in your own words. (I was there and wonder how your recollection differs)

AJ - Phil can't fight a giraffe, I'd kick him shifless, we wanted ringside seats so me, Andy, Welsh Bev and him went to the zoo. The zoo wasn't open tho, in fact it was four in the morning. and let's set this straight, it wasn't ME that puked in the taxi, it was Phil. I puked in Lynn truck stop and service station after eating my fry up and half of someone else's. It was real stodgy and made a pile rather than a puddle.

Where can people hear you, get hold of merch, etc, etc?

Check out www.myspace.com/thekirkz cos it's as sexy as it is informative, gigs, contacts the lot. We always have merch on us at gigs like tees and cd's but we forget to sell them so please do come harangue us, and if five mins later you see us at the bar and it looks like we've forgotten then harangue us again. It's the only way to get things done!!!!

Cheers.

Questions by Andy



SPEEDINGBEE

myspace.com/speedingbee

Melodic punk,
with horns
and big choruses
from the NORTH EAST

Daniel Ellis: Vocals, Bass, Nathan Griffin: Vocals, Drums, Gary Q. Whelpdale: Vocals, Guitar, other.

Working in a Travel Inn with unusually small hands and displaying an obsessive penchant for Twin Peaks is all par for the course for ska punks, Speeding Bee. But what of their music?

"We started in 2003, it's now 2008 and we're all still fairly friendly with each other," says bassist Daniel.

"However, we kicked our old bassist out for creative differences towards the end of 2007, just to spice things up a bit. He refuses to listen to anything other than Steve Albini. His name is Gareth Frank Abrahams."

"Our amps are much, much louder than when we began, but we now have a small drum kit (which we insist is roughly the same volume as the old one). Musically, I think we are a lot louder overall. We are also faster, but that's because our hands grew bigger and stronger."

The band's recent release, *Tyranny with a Difference*, has been met with enthusiasm despite initial problems. "Prior recordings tended to be almost inaudibly quiet with an incessant high pitched squeak. People have commented on the improved volume of TWAD, however hi-fi enthusiasts still suggest that a mild squeak is present. Seriously though, it is a lot louder!"

Speeding Bee have had some fairly memorable touring experiences.

"The last tour was a terrible shambles. The low point was possibly when Gary's incessant whinging over his 'chronic ball pain' meant we ended up forcing him to have a wank in the bags of a Holiday Inn in Cardiff. Ironically, the sordid act was no worse than our performance that night, in the aforementioned Inn. For Gary the high point occurred approximately 13 seconds after he entered the Holiday Inn toilets. (Gary wishes to stress that the urinals were quite close to the door, so the suggested timeframe is by no means implausible.)

"For the rest of us the highlight was playing the Birds Nest in Deptford, because they let real dogs run around in the bar."

The band were recently signed to Durham based label, Pass to the Left Records.

"Before we were signed life was bleak and cold. Gary had to get the PTL logo tattooed on his back in order to have the CD released at all. Since then we have had even less interest than we had experienced previously (which wasn't very much at all). Protoheros aren't doing too badly though."

"We once played a gig in a big theatre in Durham and got heckled by a load of BNP thugs for not liking racism. They then waited outside the venue to beat us up. We escaped through the back door, like the true prejudice-fighting heroes we are."

Though they enjoy playing gigs, Daniel says they would like to start writing again soon.

"Lately we haven't really had the chance to do much writing so at the minute we prefer that aspect of the band, but once people stop wanting us to play gigs we'll start complaining about how much we miss playing. Essentially, we hate them both with a burning passion, but at different times. Our favourite thing of all is improvised gigs that are recorded (by the fat soundman, using a shoddy, obsolete mini-disc player from OXFAM)."

"Our main influences are, Ed Hurley, Douglas Firs, The R'n'R Diner, Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent Dale Cooper, Audrey Home, Sheriff Harry S. Truman, Kylie (post-OBE), Norma Jennings, The Great Northern, Lakend Palmer, Deputy Andy, Deputy Hawk." So with their influences firmly set in the accessible David Lynch realm and with numerous groupies in their hometown of Bishop Auckland, what's next for Speeding Bee?

"Pretend to be antichrists and then sign to Sire and release a boring soft rock album called OLD WAVE. Also, to buy louder amps, or faster ones, if you can get them yet."

Interview by Beth Abbit



PRESSURE POINT - RESIST AND RIOT (GMM)

Sacramento's Pressure Point are a band that have earned their Punk Rock stripes down the years, but for me, Resist And Riot is a real coming of age. Whilst they were always a good band, they often took the role of "also rans", falling behind the likes of The Bruisers, The Beltones, and the Dropkick Murphys in terms of US Street Punk. No longer is this the case. As soon as "In Their Eyes" bursts into action this album simply screams class, and from the pure frenzy of the opening track the sound flows fluidly into the more melodic, but no less powerful, "From Hell To Eternity". It's here that Mike's vocal's come into their own, and the lyrics seem to emerge from the music in a way that is rare in Street Punk, and make no mistake, this is Street Punk ethics at it's finest, no lip service to booze and hoodlomanism, but the heart felt passion of people who are doing their "best just to stay alive." Much as the opening tracks, when compared to the band's earlier releases, mark a step from good to great, it is track three, "Rise Up", that marks the step from great to truly phenomenal. This song declares war on injustice to a backdrop of upstroke Punk Rock that can stand next to The Ruts at their best. I am not exaggerating when I say that every time I hear this song I get goose bumps on my neck simply because of how good it is. The fear here would be that the rest of the album cannot possibly live up to this killer track, but it is a fear that's unfounded. What "Rise Up" is to the memory of The Ruts, "Murder On My Mind" is to The Clash. Such comparisons though, whilst valid, are slightly unfair, as the whole album is soaked in something that is purely Pressure Point. Sure, there's clear influences from the realms of Oi!, Punk, and Reggae, but Resist And Riot is it's own record and makes no apologies for it. Relentlessly this album refuses to submit; fourteen tracks that would be the highlight of most bands' careers are delivered with impact, power, but also dignity and belief. "We'd rather fight and die than live our lives in vain" is the order of the day, and it's not the sound byte of boardroom punks turning rebellion into money, it's the battle call of downtown Sacto's finest that are "Here To Stay". All that's left then is to finish in style, and this they do. "Horatio Alger" is the perfect swan song for this album, all the different threads meeting, seemingly by accident, though surely by design, in a pure gem of a song. If someone with no knowledge of Street Punk Rock asked me what it was all about, I'd tell them to listen to this album, as it's moments like these that Punk Rock was invented for. All in all I cannot recommend this album highly enough to anyone with a love of Street Punk, Ska, or simply good music and well-crafted lyrics. I'll give this six out of five and anyone who's got a problem with my maths can fuck off.

Nozza

PENNYWISE - REASON TO BELIEVE (Epitaph)

As an owner of every single Pennywise album it's safe to say I'm a fan. These veteran punks are a band that it's very easy for people to criticise. They have certainly never tried to re-invent the wheel and to be fair you ain't gonna really notice anything particularly different about this album that they haven't done before. They are also destined to be constantly plagued by the Bad Religion comparisons and it's certainly obvious that they are an influence.

But, if you like your punk fast paced and melodic with incessant snare, there certainly are not many bands who do it better than Pennywise. It's a very American skate punk feel to the sound, which to some is gonna sound a bit dated but to those of us in our mid to late 20s who got into this sound when it was in it's prime that won't be a problem. I for one found it a real refreshing change to lots of stuff I've heard lately.

If you are new to this band any Pennywise fan will direct you to 'Full Circle', 'Straight Ahead' or 'About Time' as a better starting point. To those who know the Pennywise sound, well you know what you are gonna get. I think this album stands up to most of their material and I've been delving right back into the back catalogue since I got it because it reminded me how consistent a band they have been over the years. 'The Western world', 'Confusion' and 'Nothing to Lose' are the stand out tracks on an album, that to be fair, does have a bit of filler, but is still pretty damn good.

It's a thumbs up from me anyway! Andy

FIGHTING WITH WIRE - MAN VS MONSTER (Smalltown America)

Since their inception in 2003, this Derry, Northern Ireland trio Fighting With Wire have suffered with inconsistency, through not being able to secure the continuing services of a robust and reliable bass player. It may be surprising to learn that from the outset, latest bassist Jamie King's contribution is sturdy, strong and runding, 'Cut The Transmission'. This contribution is adeptly added to, creating the impact of Chino Moreno being backed by a combination of At The Drive In, Biffy Clyro and 30 Seconds To Mars. Helping the bright spark from Jetplane Landing, Cahir O'Doherty ignite a more robust and rock grounded fuse.

Lyrical paranoia starts in the above mentioned track and trickles through this debut album, some of this may be due to the fact that it has taken five years to prepare for. Vocal versatility stretches out the feeling and force. From the lingering era tainted cries of the Saves The Day mirroring 'Everyone Needs A Nemesis', to the slightly nasal push of 'Strength In Numbers'.

Power ballad, 'Sugar' displays a more tender heart and shows up O'Doherty's more yearning side. A haughty vocal snarl gives the moody, Metallica riffing 'Into The Ground', body and thrust. This element is emboldened by an expanding accompaniment that belies the fact that it is being produced by a trio. Gritty, grunge licked saunter of 'My Armoury', recaptures that accessible Soundgarden controlled angst and mystified perplexing.

A playful jam led hidden track that sees O'Doherty and co bantering an intro, providing a personal touch before gushing out the spiky guitar push and full-throttle percussion release of Craig McKean (formerly with Clearshot). It is worth the six minute wait and gives a hint as to the future expansiveness and retro-rocking direction that this outfit maybe heading in.

Fighting With Wire have finally officially arrived and this boost to the Northern Ireland scene could see them followed by several gripping acts, if rumours about the strength of alt rock there is anything to go by?

David Adair

MILLENCOLIN - MACHINE 15 (Burning Heart)

As with Pennywise in the previous review, Milencolin are a band who have never (and would never claim to have) re-invented the wheel. In fact they pay as much themselves in title track, 'Machine 15'.

However, as with Pennywise they are a band who hold many memories for me after seeing them countless times over the last decade. As with Pennywise, they could also be dropped into the skate punk category if you want your music classifying, but they are nowhere near as fast as Pennywise and there is a more punk n' roll edge to their sound.

This is fairly consistent with what they have done in the past, with nice subtle melodies, good choruses and some memorable songs. It's not as good as past offerings such as the fantastic, 'For Monkeys' or the ska tinged 'Life on a Plate', but for a proper 90s kid like me it was another refreshing change, which I reckon is worth checking out if you ever got into this band, but unfortunately I feel, it's not really gonna increase their fan base too dramatically. I however, am a fan and like it lots. Andy

Bedlam Breakout 5, The Soundhaus, Northampton: The Speedkings, The Valentine Villains, Henry and The Bleeders, The Hyperjax, Blue Demon, Coffin Nails, Long Tall Texans, The Caravans

The Bedlam Breakout all-dayers were first conceived in that very barren period of psychobilly history, the mid-90s, a time when the initial momentum of the early to mid-80s had had long ground to a halt, and the chameleons had jumped ship to whatever fad was popular at that time, leaving a hardcore of fans disillusioned and with nowhere to go. In the face of smaller crowds and a dwindling pool of bands to promote, the Bedlam boys were brave enough to not only throw a lot of money at organising events for a comatose scene, but also to bring over bands from America and Central Europe (apparently Mad Sin, Godless Wicked Creeps played their first UK gigs at Bedlam). Following a 10-year hiatus and a resurgence of interest in psychobilly, the gents responsible last year decided to make another go of it, booking King Kurt to play in front of a packed Soundhaus. One year and two gigs later and Bedlam Breakout 5 saw two colossi of 80s psychobilly The Long Tall Texans and last minute stand-ins The Caravans and a plethora of UK talent in support (not to mention 500 drunken, overweight, nostalgic psychobillyists) descend on Northampton for the latest installment in these increasingly popular all-day gigs.

Like most people in attendance that day, we unfortunately missed openers The Speedkings because of the long drive down and an early kick off, so unfortunately there's a bit of a gap in this review, but I caught most of second-placed Bristol-based sleazy garage/neo-rockabilly mob the Valentine Villains so we'll start from there! These guys had a great look, sexy and streetwise, and a good sound to match - all growly guitars and a solid rhythm section (featuring Scott from The Coffin Nails on bass), but female vocals have never really done anything for me. They seemed to be well received though and I can see these becoming a bit of a staple on the 'billy circuit in months to come.

Despite having played the southern circuit for about 3 years now, this was the first opportunity I'd had to catch Ambassador Records' Bedford psychobilly crew Henry And The Bleeders. These boys played an energetic set of 80s styled trad psychobilly, endearing themselves to a receptive (perhaps nostalgic) crowd with a set made up mostly of rockabilly covers. There's a lot of rough edges here, but these boys are still very young and have a great deal of potential. Adam's vocals and stage presence are reminiscent of a young Pip Hancock, and the rhythm section is solid, if a little unspectacular, but my main criticism of these guys is their lack of original material - in a half hour set, I think I counted 4 originals, and their choice of covers is far from original - mostly songs covered by neo-rockabilly bands or psychobilly bands in the 80s - Cast Iron Arm etc.

Blue Demon don't play bad gigs, and this was business as usual for them - a tight-as-a-gnat's-chuff set punctuated with their self-deprecating scouse humour made this an enjoyable set and a highlight of the day. Their schizo blend of psychobilly and breakneck western swing went down on absolute storm with the already nicely warmed-up crowd, as did dedicating the anthem 'Hey Buddy (Fuck You!)' to a certain Mr Paul Roman. These lads go from strength to strength and did a fucking fantastic job of flying the flag for northern psychobilly. It's nice to see people in the scene starting to sit up and take notice of these boys - it's about bloody time.

I'll make no secret of the fact that I don't like Coffin Nails on record, but for me, of the 'big three' that played on Saturday, these were the best of the bunch - Klunky was in fine fettle, and the 'Nails sound infinitely better with a double bass. Playing a fine 'greatest hits' set, the highlight of which, for me, was breaking into a cover Reel2Reel's 'I like to move it' mid-song, CN threw their all into it, and the crowd responded with the first wrecking of the day, good stuff.

Next up were another set of Psychobilly Good Old Boys; The Long Tall Texans. Having been around since the days of Klubfoot yore, you'd expect LTT to be reliable at best, but it was an 'interesting' set from these guys; Mark Carew was on fine form, bounding around and grinning maniacally in his inimitable way, but to me the band seemed a little marooned by the event and omitted some pretty obvious crowd pleasers. Nonetheless, a good, if not particularly tight set and these were the only band to play an encore.

Finally, a cobbled-together Caravans line-up took to the stage; featuring Mark Pennington, his son, Sam, on drums and Radio City Riot bassist Rob Phantom. Original headliners The Frantic Flintstones broke up 24 hours before flying over for the gig and by all accounts Pennington filled in at the 11th hour so not too much criticism can be levelled at the Caravan's performance which wasn't actually that bad, by all means, just wasn't what people had hoped for and wasn't befitting of a headline act. Another set made up of a great deal covers (more punk than rockabilly though - I spotted Rancid, NOFX and Jimmy Eat World!), The Caravans made the best of a bad job, and played an entertaining, if a little short, set, again omitting several obvious choices, particularly from their earlier albums. Oddly, as a three-piece, they sounded a lot punkier than on previous occasions and on their recorded output, strangely drawing comparisons (perhaps unfairly!) from several people in attendance to a certain Northwest-based Punkabilly band also in attendance!

A great deal more drinking and dodgy dancing followed at an excellent afterparty and so concluded the 5th installment of Bedlam Breakout. From chatting to a few familiar faces, the general consensus was that a good day was had by all, but surprisingly the young blood had ably stood up to the bigger names and in some cases put in a better showing. I think the promoters can be proud of the success of the day, and despite the obvious setbacks threw together an amazing party in the face of a great deal of adversity and apathy. These guys do what they do for their love of Psychobilly, NOT for the money or the 'scene points' or the birds that inevitably come with the territory of being a good promoter (unlike some promoters in this scene that I could name and shame), and for that, they should be applauded on the success of these gigs - I for one am looking forward to the next one.

Liam Revenge

Punk & Disorderly Festival - Berlin 21st - 24th February 2008

This was my first time at Punk & Disorderly, though I'd heard good reports. I tried to go with an open mind, rather than expect the world and be disappointed. As it turned out, any fears of disappointment were largely unwarranted. I arrived on Thursday; the festival proper doesn't start 'til Friday, but there are several official, and unofficial pre-shows on Thursday night in Kreuzberg (the place that the Northern Quarter thinks it is), though sorely tempted by Wild At Heart, a fantastic Punk Rock'n'Roll bar, I decided to go instead to Lido to see Toxpack, East Berlin Streetcore. Lido's a decent sized venue, and I was worried that it would feel empty, but as it was the place was rammed. It's truly uplifting to go to a small gig and have a couple of hundred or more people turn out and get stuck in. Highschool Nightmare, and a talking German band that I could neither spell nor pronounce the name of supported Toxpack. The first two bands were very poppy, though enjoyable, rather like the Buzzcocks in German; I had a chat with the guitarist from the unpronounceable band later in the weekend, a nice guy with the right attitude. I'm always delighted by the way the world over; Punk Rock unites like-minded good people. Toxpack were much harsher than the opening bands, as you would expect from East Berlin Streetcore I'm sure. I'd love to tell you what the songs were about, but sadly my German's not up to it, so I just enjoyed the sound and atmosphere. I couldn't help but feel that Toxpack could be much bigger if they sang in English, but I respect their choice to sing in their own language, and they certainly seem to have the Berlin Punks and (much more numerous) Skins onside.

So, Friday dawns and it's time for the festival proper. As I didn't have a ticket, I planned to get there early, and find a local bar so that I could get to the front of the queue when the box office opened. This was the first of my ever so minor disappointments. The venue was deep into East Berlin, on the fantastically named Allee De Kosmonauten (Cosmonaut Road), sadly there is not a bar in sight, and after walking round the many car showrooms that surround the venue, a couple of good Punk lads from Normandy shared their beer (purchased earlier from Lido) and we waited for the gates to open. As we waited, the unpronounceably named band from last night turn up and fall out of a taxi, already well and truly plastered, and the festival hasn't even started yet; I guess more than one aspect of Punk Rock is the same the world over. Once inside the compound, I purchased a ticket from an ice-cream Van, opted to skip ordering a screwball or a 99, as it's a little chilly in the Prussian winter, and proceeded into the venue. It was thirty minutes before the first band, so I grabbed myself a beer and perused the obligatory merch stalls. I was delighted to see an array of S.H.A.R.P. and "Gold Night White Pride" patches, pins, and t-shirts amongst the band related and branded stuff. It's worth mentioning that despite the crowd having an overwhelmingly Skinhead majority, which is understandable given the headline act, I did not encounter a single far right or white-power Skinhead all weekend. Indeed one of the organisers later commented that the police had checked his beer early Sunday morning, as they thought to have so many people and so little trouble, he must be putting something in the drinks. There was even an Antifascist Aktion stand in the arena.

Anyway, special mention on Friday's line up has to go to Chemical Chaos, I'd not seen these guys before, though I had seen the bedreadlocked scaffold scaling vocalist working as crew at various other gigs and festivals. They were the night Punk and least Oit of the weekend's acts, being somewhat Conflict like, and featured a guest performance from Texas Terri, who seemed to be a regular on both stages despite not actually being on the bill at all. A vast improvement aesthetically from Terri, was Deadline's Liz, and they were definitely on form. I've loved them for years, and although they've waxed and waned repeatedly in that time, they were on a high in Berlin, and were probably the highlight of Friday night. Headline on Friday was the second, and final, disappointment of the weekend. The Buzzsaw are a special band to me, being one of my all time favourites and the band that first introduced me to Streetpunk, but truth be told, they were poor that night. They can be partly forgiven as they had a stand-in drummer, a member of Ireland's Blood or Whiskey, who looked unperturbed despite playing front of a Cross of St. George. To me though, all the songs seemed slowed down, and whilst Mickey Fitz was chirpy as ever, the whole performance lacked a certain something. When I heard that Tosh of Section 8 had joined, I thought he may add the stage presence that's been missing since Steve Whale left, but that was not the case, and the whole performance was simply flat.

JOHN ROBB - GOLDBLADE



So, I enter Saturday night but not ecstatic, that was soon to change, but I'm jumping ahead. One thing I liked about this festival was that serious thought had clearly gone into the running order. There were two stages, and bands were timed to start as the other stage finished, thus it was possible to literally see every minute of every band if one had the stamina. Also, the first band didn't go on until around 18:00 each day, meaning outsiders could enjoy the magnificent city as well. Alexanderplatz is well worth a visit as is the aforementioned Kreuzberg with Punk Rock specialist Core Tex Records. I whiffed away a good few hours on Saturday afternoon drinking in the Kreuzkeller, and watching Hertha Berlin fail to capitulate on multiple attempts to get a goalless draw with Stuttgart. Then it was on the MS and east for more Punk Rock. Saturday was packed with the English Dogs, The Partisans, and of course, the 4-Skins. There were no disappointments on Saturday, it was the first time I'd seen the English Dogs, amazing after ten years of going to these gigs - I know, they were great, and I feel damn crazy should have made the effort, well, ten years ago to see them. I watched The Partisans whilst sharing a beer all night with Goldblade's Brother Keith. I was slightly disappointed when I saw The Partisans last, but they've put the intervening time to good use and delivered in Berlin. A chuckle was raised when Blind Ambition was introduced as "the first ever Emo song", and whilst I see his point, I think there's a little too much fight in the song for fringe brigade. I also saw a new band to me, Stormer 98, who played a good mix of Oi! and Skinhead Ska that had the crowd bouncing, and the boots stamping. Then came the 4-Skins. Sure it was a bit of a nostalgia trip, and Gary Hughes was the only original member of the bunch, but at least it was Hodges, and not Rob Pierce. He stuck to his own era stuff, which all but the most loony of 4-Skins fans agree was the best era, and delivered what was needed, a frenzy of Oi! that had me jumping into the thick of the Berlin Skins, and going quite frankly, fucking nuts. Despite being away for so long, Hodges exudes stage presence, and even managed to keep a straight face when he performed Yesterday's Heroas. All the greats were there, One Low For Them, Evk, 1984, Choot, the list goes on, and I returned to my hostel with high spirits and that buzz that only great live music can give you.

Sunday began quite disturbingly when I bumped into John Robb, or, as I like to think of him the workingman's Des O'Connor, in the hostel reception, but soon picked up when I saw him again on stage fronting Goldblade and partaking in his usual Johnny Bravo-esque lunacy. Goldblade were as consistently solid as ever, and how anyone with ears can not like them is truly beyond my understanding. Lyrics aside, there was no fighting on the dance floor, and only a little fucking the streets. Though there was a fair amount of felling over shit faces in the bushes as I recall. Sunday's, and possibly the weekend's "find" were the Radio Dead Ones, who despite the crap name were a band I really took notice of. They have a real sense of fun, but the kind of fun that can be taken seriously, slightly Ruts like in parts, and yet also very raw and vibrant. Definitely one to keep an eye out for. I think a special mention should be made here of the bratwurst, the stall outside supplied me with a large number of Germany's speciality sausage, as well as some of the nicest steak sandwiches I've ever tasted. Suffice to say that when I returned by belt was somewhat tighter than when I flew out. So, from sausages to Argy Bargo, and Cock Sporter's steaks twice removed delivered a good solid onslaught of Streetpunk, mixing new with old favourites, and were exactly what Sunday night needs. Grand finale came in the form of a man who could teach even Gary Hodges or John Robb a thing or two about stage presence, none other than the legendary Neville Staple. Soon everyone was skanking away to Gangsters, Too Much Too Young, Ghost Town, and of course, the Skinhead Symphony. That is everyone except for the numerous crowd surfers who seemed to amuse Neville greatly, and make him cringe when they fell. So, all in all, Punk & Disorderly is a fine festival. I got flights, tickets, and accommodation, for the same money as accommodation alone cost me in Blackpool for Rebelion last year, and at just 2 euros a pint in the venue, this festival's really viable for British Punk Rock fans. I went this year, primarily for the 4-Skins, but I loved it, and will return next year, for the festival. I hope some of you can join me.

Review by Mazza

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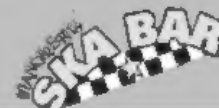
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